

Table Top Exercise Preps Partners for Emergencies

“Gasping Granny” was the name of a Table Top Exercise for Sentinel Laboratories, which was part of a three-part exercise developed by Preparedness Partners subject matter experts.

The exercise, facilitated by Susan Belt and Capt. John Marmon from the Kansas Highway Patrol, Sue Riley and Shannon Gable from KDHE Division of Health and Environmental Laboratories and Michael McNulty from KDHE Division of Health, challenged the Sentinel Laboratory response to a mysterious illness affecting the special population of a long term care facility. In the scenario several individuals, whose primary residence was “Mocking Bird Manor,” came down with a severe respiratory illness and were transported to ‘make believe’ hospital groups made up of laboratorians from all over the state.

The exercise was designed to test or identify the individual hospital capacity, understanding of reportable disease regulations, interaction with infection control, and utilization of individual and regional plans, of the laboratories, in response to a major outbreak.

In this designed scenario, the participants were assigned to tables according the size of the hospital they came from. Each table was assigned the average daily census at the participating hospital (using clothes pins as patients) and asked to provide the number of laboratory staff normally working on the days indicated in the exercise. During the activity additional clothes pin patients were added to the hospital load and participants were asked to raise flags when they or their infection control practitioner would alert public health, change their available test menu, transfer patients, ask for help from the hospital region, and many other questions about surge capacity and resource management.



Capt. John Marmon, KHP, leads participants through another series of directives during the ‘Gasping Granny’ Table Top Emergency Drill held recently.

The exercise ended with a reading of the story created by the facilitators indicating that in this particular tabletop exercise the patients were infected intentionally. Questions were then asked about how the criminal element would change the response. Feedback from the participants was positive and the thought provoking questions posed will help individual and regions to more effectively review their current plans and improve their preparedness status.